Kenneth E. Boulding

Religious Perspectives of College Teaching in Economics

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In Economics

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THE EDWARD W. HAZEN FOUNDATION
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PREFACE TO THE SERIES OF ESSAYS

Three years ago Professor George F. Thomas of Princeton University, in a letter to The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, urged the need for careful studies by natural scientists, social scientists, and humanistic scholars concerning the religious issues, implications and responsibilities involved in the teaching of their respective disciplines. This pamphlet is part of a series instituted by The Edward W. Hazen Foundation for the purpose of carrying Professor Thomas' suggestion into the sphere of fruitful inquiry and discussion. Under the sponsorship of The Foundation, the undersigned committee has enlisted the aid of distinguished scholars deeply interested in the relations between religion and higher education. Each of these scholars will discuss the problem in its specific pertinence to his own field of learning, his own conception of his intellectual and spiritual responsibilities to his students, to the institution which he serves, and to society in general. He will address himself primarily to fellow-teachers in his field, secondarily to students and to interested members of the educated public.

The committee responsible for the survey wishes to steer a course between two opposite dangers: that of a theological vagueness which would produce nothing but noncommital generalities, and that of a dogmatism which would alienate all but a small number of readers. The views of the authors of these essays may vary from liberal to orthodox interpretations of religion. Throughout this diversity, however, runs a common denominator which is shared by the authors and by the members of the committee. Religion is not nature-worship, or man-worship, or science-worship. It is not the totality of human value. Although it is metaphysical, ethical, and humanitarian, it cannot be equated with metaphysics, or ethics, or humanitarianism. Religion is man's quest for communion with an ultimate spiritual reality completely independent of human desires and imaginings. Religion apprehends this Absolute Reality and Value in faith, and seeks to give concrete embodiment to the ineffable in creed, cult, and conduct. The creative power of the universe is not an intellectual abstraction but an objective entity, a Divine Being. Although God infinitely transcends our human nature and understanding, He most potently reveals Himself to those who conceive of Him in personal terms. Thus symbolized, He becomes

for us not merely Cosmic Mind, but Creator, Judge and Redeemer of mankind.

Within this broad but positive consensus the authors of these essays will exercise complete freedom in expressing their personal views. As regards the relevance of religion for higher education there is also general agreement among those associated with this survey. The cleavage which divides intellectual from spiritual life is probably the most ominous defect of modern civilization. "High religion and intellectual enterprise belong together," says Professor Robert L. Calhoun. "Each gains from close association with the other. The two in conjunction, but neither one by itself, can move with hope toward more effective conquest of the chaos that again and again threatens to engulf human living. That way lies whatever chance we may have for a more humane world."

In his essay *Colleges, Faculties and Religion,* appraising consultations with more than fifty faculties, Professor Albert C. Outler reports that "Education is by way of being reformed with little or no regard for the possible contribution of religion to its reformation. For a very tangled skein of reasons, it has come to pass that, in the name of tolerance and the democratic spirit, American educators (whatever their private beliefs and convictions) have in fact suppressed the consideration of the problems of the religious interpretation of reality and human existence in the educational process." He sees, however, evidence that religion will become increasingly influential in American higher education if it can receive "a fair hearing in the open forum of American academic discussion . . . . Where this is done, there is usually a vigorous and generally favorable reaction from both faculty and students."

To obtain such a "fair hearing" from a large academic audience is the purpose of these essays. Even in these days of "general education," however, the modern scholar remains a specialist. He is likely to be less interested in the general problem of the place of religion in higher education than in the specific problem of how religion pertains to the teaching of his particular subject. This more specialized aspect of the question deserves more careful investigation than it has hitherto received. At present, therefore, these essays are being published as separate pamphlets so that each may appeal directly to those concerned with the discipline which it discusses.

It is hoped, however, that the project may prove fruitful enough to justify later publication in a single volume or perhaps in three shorter books devoted respectively to the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

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RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES IN ECONOMICS

KENNETH E. BOULDING

I.

The economist—or any other specialist—differs from his fellow-teachers mainly by reason of the subject matter which he teaches. It may be, of course, that there is some relation between the nature of a subject and the nature of its practitioners: the social sciences are perhaps more likely to attract those of a reforming temperament, the experimental sciences those of a mechanical temperament, and the humanities those of an artistic temperament. But by and large these differences are small, and there is not much reason to suppose that economists are either more or less religious than biologists or musicians. Religion is a matter for the whole man and the full man, not for the specialized part of him. It is for this reason perhaps that specialization is in itself somewhat inimical to religion; the man who throws his whole being into the narrow channel of a single specialty, be it chemistry or economics, is quite apt to be hostile, or at least indifferent, to the great generalities of the spiritual and moral life. The Love of God escapes both the test tube and the formula. In this matter the economist is not much different from other men: and such differences as there are arise from the peculiarities of the subject which he teaches and investigates. I shall begin my argument, therefore, by considering religion and economics as subject matter, that is, as two great fields of human experience and study: and ask to what extent are they adjoining, overlapping, or quite independent; to what extent are they enemies or friends, do they compete with or complete each other in the vast ecology of ideas.

We shall consider first the impact of religion on economic life and history. The impact on economic life seems to have been much greater than the impact on economic thought. From its very beginning religion has strongly affected not only the nature of the commodities which form the main subject matter of economic life, but also the economic institutions and practices which so largely determine the course of economic development. Religion built the pyramids, the temples, the cathedrals. It draws resources into the manufacture of vestments, incense, images, prayer rugs, and prayers.

More important than this, however, from the point of view of the economist, is its impact upon the minds of men, its shaping of their beliefs, customs, and practices. It is not the physical resources so much as the human resources of a society which determine the course of its economic development, if any, whether towards riches or towards poverty. Men have languished in utter poverty in the midst of great natural resources, and have wrung comfort and even luxury from stern and unfriendly physical environments. It is what lies in the minds of men that determines, for the most part, whether a society shall grow in productive power; it is only this growth that has carried man from a pitiful, half-starved savagery to the splendor, comfort and dangers of civilization, and this growth is closely connected with the nature of this dominant religion.

The exact conditions of economic progress are very complex and imperfectly understood. Certain physical conditions seem to be necessary—e.g., the absence of extreme pressure of population. Given these conditions, however, the most apparent determining factor seems to be the character of the religion of the period—particularly whether it is "prophetic" or "priestly." This distinction corresponds roughly to the "early" or "late" stages of any particular religion or any phase within the history of a particular religion. In its early or prophetic phase religion acts as a revolutionary force, stirring the minds and hearts of men out of their routines, changing them and making them receptive to change. It is in this stage that economic progress is most likely to be rapid, for progress cannot take place without change, and the willingness to change, to try new methods of production, new commodities, and new techniques, and the willingness to tolerate others who are making such changes is likely to be greater in an age of "conversion," when there is also a willingness to try new ideas, new faiths, and new patterns of life. When on the other hand religion settles down into its "priestly" stage it becomes a conservative force making for the persistence of established routines and the satisfaction of creative energies through repetitive ritual rather than through innovation. In this stage religion is likely to be inimical to economic progress, simply because it creates a general disapproval of change of any kind.[1]

[1] I do not mean to imply, of course, that there is any rigid separation between the prophetic and the priestly stages, nor that each is necessarily embodied in a

Besides its influence in affecting attitudes towards change, religion, through its theology and its ethical systems, also influences the attitudes of men towards various forms of economic behavior. Thus a very "otherworldly" religion is likely to lead to a low social status for merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, business men and other "moneychangers" whose activities seem to be centered on "this world," and a correspondingly high status for monks, nuns, fakirs, contemplatives and mendicants whose contribution to the economic order is that of consumption rather than of production, however great their contributions to spiritual welfare. Such a religion is also likely to discourage accumulation of capital—not so much because of its encouragement of consumption—there is great frugality among the otherworldly—but because of its discouragement of the production of tangible objects of desire. On the other hand a more "this-worldly" type of religion, stressing, for instance, some concept such as the "Kingdom of God on earth" and emphasizing the attainment of some degree of perfection and satisfaction in this world, is likely to place a higher value on those engaged in the more humdrum tasks of life, and consequently to be favorable to economic progress. A this-worldly religion is also likely to encourage capital accumulation, by its emphasis on productive work, and when this is combined with ideals of frugality and simplicity in living the favorable effect on accumulation is thereby reinforced.

We cannot, in an essay of this length, do more than illustrate these propositions. The most famous illustration is Max Weber's thesis regarding the influence of the Protestant Reformation on the development of capitalism. The Protestant Reformation (not only in itself, but also in the Counter-Reformation which it induced) represents a great upsurge of religion of a more prophetic, and also more this-worldly type than the medieval Catholicism which preceded it. New ideas, ferment and change in the realm of faith and morals, paved the way for new adventures in trade, agriculture, and industry. The puritan morality, with its emphasis on work, "vocation," and activity on the side of production, and its

particular form of organization. Thus the Catholic church, while priestly in its general organization, has produced a number of "prophetic" movements such as that of the Franciscans; and the Protestant churches, while generally ostensibly "prophetic" in their form of organization, have passed through many periods of "priestliness."

emphasis on simplicity of life, temperance and frugality on the side of consumption, greatly favored that rise of production above consumption which is necessary for capital accumulation. In a sense also the simplification of religion itself which Protestantism represented enabled men to satisfy their religious requirements with a smaller expenditure of time and energy than before, and hence left more for other pursuits. Instead of the great apparatus of masses, feasts, fasts, confessions, penances, retreats, novenas and so on of Catholicism, we now have a stripped sabbatarianism fed by once-a-week calls to action from the pulpit rather than by constant daily meditation in the cloister. I shall not debate in these pages whether the spiritual product of the new religious technique was as good as the old; but there can be no doubt that it was obtained much more cheaply in terms of time and effort, and that therefore human energy which in the middle ages was channeled into vast ritual or religious practices and "works" was now available for trade, industry, and economic development. These "worldly" activities moreover were themselves sanctified by the idea of "vocation," according to which all things could be done to God's glory and in obedience to His will.

Just as the Lutheran,[2] Reformed, and Episcopal church movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries influenced the so-called "commercial revolution" of this time in England, Holland and to a less extent in Germany and Scandinavia, so the even more "prophetic" Protestantism of the Quakers and Methodists influenced the "industrial revolution" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is astonishing how many of the basic technical discoveries of the early industrial revolution in England are associated with the members of non-conformist sects. This can hardly be an accident. These groups emphasized a "lay," non-priestly religion, stressing conversion and change in the individual, and emphasizing the this-worldly aspects of the Christian gospel in terms of disciplined daily living. They were, moreover, barred from higher education and hence delivered both from intellectual conformity and from easy professional ways of life. They had a deserved reputation for honesty and integrity. It is not surprising, therefore,

[2] It is significant that Lutheranism—by far the most "priestly" of the Protestant movements—exercised a much smaller effect on economic life than did the other Protestant movements.

that they developed iron-smelting, textiles, railroads, insurance, banking, retailing, and were deeply involved in all the technological changes of the period. Nor were these involvements merely of a material nature. The "social inventions" which are equally part of the same revolution in human affairs were also inspired in no small measure by nonconformists and evangelicals. Social legislation, beginning with the abolition of slavery and the development of the factory acts, was in its beginnings largely the work of nonconformists or evangelicals like Wilberforce, Clarkson, and Lord Shaftesbury and their coteries. Even more important is the influence of nonconformity on the growth of science: a wholly disproportionate number of members of the Royal Society, for instance, were nonconformists: it was men like Priestley the Unitarian and Dalton the Quaker who were most active in scientific inquiry. It was British nonconformity which set the moral and intellectual tone of American society, and the progressive nature of American economic life is closely connected with the prophetic, evangelical, individualistic and this-worldly character of American religion. In America we are all Methodists now!

These two examples are sufficient to illustrate the intimate connection between religious and economic history; the historically minded reader will think of many others. The great economic development in Europe of the tenth and eleventh centuries—embodied in the Romanesque cathedrals and castles—is closely connected with the earlier conversion of the barbarian tribes to Christianity. The flowering of Arab civilization after the rise of Mohammed is another striking example of the impact of a "prophetic" religion, just as its rapid withering is an example of the corrupting effects of a rigid orthodoxy.

II.

So far we have looked at the relationship mainly from the point of view of the impact of religion on economic life: we do not have to be a Marxist to admit that this connection is reciprocal, and that in their turn economic institutions and conditions affect the form and content of religion. The economic interpretation of history is little help in explaining the *genesis* of religions, which arise as a result of certain *mutations*—to borrow a word from genetics—in human personality and experience. Where the economic interpretation is useful is in explaining the survival of such mutations as

occur. There are many prophets, but few of them are founders of living religions. A religion cannot survive unless it is accepted among men, and its acceptance depends largely on its ability to satisfy human wants and needs. This is not to say that only those religions survive which enhance material prosperity. To a considerable degree the Bread of Life is a substitute, if not for the bread at least for the cake of this world, and the fire of Charity may warm as effectively as fine clothes and central heating. Indeed, one may say with some confidence that when the tide of religion runs strongly in the minds of men it draws them away from worldly power, wealth and security, and offers them in return a power, a wealth and a security which are not of this world, not dependent on the favor of other men, but are secured by a secret inward covenant between the soul and its heavenly Lord. Taking no thought for the morrow, carrying neither scrip nor staff, the heaven-intoxicated pilgrim "walks cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every man" unencumbered by worldly cares or worldly goods. There have been many such golden dawns of Gospel purity, and one and all they fade into the plain light of a workaday world. As the early enthusiasm recedes substitute satisfactions must be found, and when manna no longer falls we must devote ourselves to husbandry. But a religion cannot survive unless it increases men's satisfactions, however compounded these may be of earth and heaven: this is the "economic test". A religion which makes men miserable will scarcely survive its first generation.

The nature of the dominant religion, therefore, is determined in an appreciable degree by the economic opportunities which are open. In some societies, for instance, the pressure of population makes any economic progress almost impossible, and Malthus' "dismal science" is operating at its most dismal. Any improvement in techniques is immediately swallowed up by the flood of population, and the final result of such improvements is not to improve the lot of individuals, but to enable more people to live in the old misery! In such a situation religion is likely to be otherworldly, ritualistic, and mystical, offering to man hopes of the hereafter and the present consolations of inward experience. On the other hand in a situation where a rapid increase in the economic welfare of a society is possible through the improvement of techniques and the accumulation of capital, a religion which is this-worldly, economical of resources, and practical in its applications is more likely to meet

human needs. Thus the religions of the overcrowded East have laid great stress on salvation by withdrawal from the world: in such a society the monk, the contemplative, and the fakir flourish, and the appeal of religion to the mass of men is either that of propitiation of fortune or of hope for a better life elsewhere, whether in a reincarnation or in a heaven. In bustling America on the other hand the world has seemed too good to withdraw from, and economic opportunity too great to be spurned: religion has adapted itself accordingly and has become more secular, more "lay", more "practical".

If wealth consists in the satisfaction of wants there are two roads to riches: one is the diminution of wants, the other is the increase in the means of satisfaction. Which road we take depends on their relative roughness. If the increase in the means of satisfaction is denied us by the rigor of economic circumstance, we are more likely to take the *via negativa* towards a nirvana of wantlessness. This is the way that we associate with the congested and hopeless East. The West, on the other hand, came later to civilization and had opportunities for geographical expansion northward and westward which the East did not have. Here the increase in the means of satisfaction has always seemed more possible and the *via negativa* has been less attractive, except in periods of recession and collapse. It is not surprising therefore that it was Macedonia (that America of ancient Greece!) that gave the call to the apostle Paul, and that Christianity became the religion of the West, for Jesus gave Christianity a stamp of this-worldliness which it can never quite escape. At the heart of Eastern religions is a Way from Man to God: at the heart of Christianity is an incarnation of God in Man and a dream of a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

It is clear that the causative relationship between religious and secular life in the stream of history is a complex mutual one of a hen-and-egg nature, and that attempts to interpret history solely in terms of one or the other, as in the Marxian economic interpretation, is like trying to develop an egg theory of hens or a hen theory of eggs. A satisfactory theory of history must consist of two elements: an understanding of the principles of ecological equilibrium and succession, and an ability to recognize mutations when they occur. History is the record of the growth and decline of populations, whether of the flora and fauna of a forest or of the char-

acteristics, ideas and institutions of men. The rise and fall of states, empires, churches, religions and philosophies is a similar process to the rise and decline of species in the world of nature, and is determined mainly by the competitive or complementary relationships of the various forms of life or organization. The succession of cultures in human history is not unlike the succession of complexes of plant and animal life in the pond or the forest: each culture provides the breeding ground for ideas, institutions, and patterns of behavior which will eventually supplant it. This ecological succession, however, is not confined to any one aspect of life, but covers the whole of it: material and spiritual species interact upon each other ceaselessly and with endless complexity: religions breed civilizations, and civilizations breed and spread religions in a continuous pattern.

Every "ecosystem" (as the biologists call a complete system of mutually interacting populations of different species) is subject from time to time to incursions from without. These may be invasions of new species from other ecosystems, as when Japanese beetles invade the United States or Marxist ideology invades the labor movement. Or they may be "mutations"—changes in the genetic constitution, coming from we know not where or whom. Were it not for these invasions and mutations every society would soon settle down to a position of equilibrium: it is these which keep history perpetually on the move. Both the economic and the religious aspects of society are subject to invasions and mutations. The invention of a new technique in production, or of a new commodity, represents a "mutation" in economic life. The founders of religions likewise represent mutations in the spiritual life. The spread of new techniques, or of new religions, is a process analogous to "invasion." It must not be thought, of course, that mutations are arbitrary. They can only take place within narrow limits set by the existing state of affairs. A mutation from a mouse never turns out to be an elephant. The automobile could not have been invented in the seventeenth century: it could hardly help being invented at the end of the nineteenth. Given the invention of the rudder the discovery of America was almost inevitable—as someone has well said, how could Columbus miss it! It is easy to find these connections in history; they are never, however, as certain or as definite as they look after the event. It is not always

easy to recognize true mutations, but it can hardly be doubted that they occur, and that they occur as much, if not more, in the world of belief and ideas[3] as they do in the world of techniques and commodities. We cannot, therefore, understand economic processes in time without reference to the whole universe of social phenomenon, of which religion is a vital and significant part.

III.

I have sketched very briefly some of the interactions of religious and economic life in history, and while the details of the interconnectedness may be open to some question, the fact of interconnectedness is abundantly evident. Nevertheless the student of economics in our universities can easily get through his course, and can be turned out as a full-fledged teacher of the subject, without any awareness of this interconnectedness penetrating his consciousness. It is no exaggeration to say that unless a student happens to come into contact with a teacher whose specialized interests lie, say, towards Max Weber's type of interpretation of history, he can pass through his whole formal instruction without any sense of contact between economics and religion, as realms of discourse. Religion, like liquor, is something which he can take or not, according to taste, but unless indulged in to excess it will in no way affect the world of ideas which he inhabits as an economist. The conceptual framework of economics and the practical questions on which it impinges—whether new or old—supply and demand, prices, savings, investment, trade, tariffs, taxes, output, employment—are concepts which inhabit a self-sufficient realm of their own, and seem to have nothing whatever to do with the realm of discourse in which we discuss God, prayer, worship, grace, salvation, communion, justification, and the like.

This is quite understandable, and even up to a point, proper. Although in life and history religion and economics are inseparably intertwined in the great web of reality, in thought and theory they are quite distinct, and have very little contact. Both theology and economics along with all other theoretical frameworks—represent *abstractions* from reality, and hence we should not expect

[3] To Christians, of course, Jesus represents the most significant "mutation" in history: with him a new spiritual species—the "new man in Christ Jesus" enters the world of time.

them to cover much of the same material. It is as if economic theory looks only at the black threads, and religious theory (i.e., theology, in its broad sense) only at the gold threads of a great and complex tapestry: the picture that each presented would be very different, yet each might be part of a single reality. Moreover, to him that concentrated on the black, the gold might appear to be simply a meaningless irruption of unnecessary splendor in the chaste material of reality, while to the specialist on gold the black might appear as completely beneath his notice, an insignificant background to the real splendors of the creation. Other specialists similarly may concentrate only on other threads, to their similar gain and loss.

The economist, by reason of the peculiar history of economic thought, is especially in danger of being *indifferent* to religion. It is difficult for a student of history, or literature, or ethics, or art, to be *unaware* of the intimate connection in life and history of his own speciality and religious life. Some of the natural sciences, perhaps even medicine, have a certain history of hostility on the part of the church which may lead to a conflict with religion. Economics, however, sprang at least half grown from the head of Adam Smith, who may very properly be regarded as the founder of economics as a *unified* abstract realm of discourse, and it still, almost without knowing it, breathes a good deal of the air of eighteenth-century rationalism and Deism. Adam Smith, it will be remembered, was an intimate friend of David Hume; between them they almost personify the eighteenth century at its most urbane, like the elegant New Town of Edinburgh that was building around them. They both led blameless lives in a quiet way; they both express the amused tolerance and sweet reasonableness of an age whose fires are banked. Both regarded religious enthusiasm as a serious breach of good taste, yet both are saved from dullness by a good touch of Scottish wit and moral indignation.

Adam Smith's observations on religion are worth mention at this point, even at the cost of some digression, not only because of their intrinsic interest, but because they represent almost everything that economists, *qua* economists, have said on this subject. It is indeed curious that no economist since Adam Smith seems

to have dealt at any length with the economics of religion[4]—perhaps it was felt that Adam Smith had said the last word on the subject! His observations are found, oddly enough, in that chapter of Book 5 of the *Wealth of Nations* headed "Of the Expenses of the Sovereign or Commonwealth," under Article III, "Of the Expense of Institutions for the Instruction of People of All Ages." In the previous section ("Of the Expense of Institutions for the Education of Youth") he has applied his principle of the free market to education, denounced educational monopolies and endowed professors, and pointed out that the best teaching is usually done by those whose rewards are related in some manner to the success of their efforts—hence he advocates what is essentially the "elective system." He then goes on to apply the same principles to the church, and to point out how the endowment and establishment of a monopolistic state church leads to a diminution of religious zeal, which flourishes most among those whose support depends upon it. "The advantage in point of learning and good writing may sometimes be on the side of the established church. But the arts of popularity, all the arts of gaining proselytes, are constantly on the side of its adversaries. In England those arts have long been neglected by the well-endowed clergy of the established church, and are at present chiefly cultivated by the Dissenters and by the Methodists. The independent provisions, however, which in many places have been made for dissenting teachers by means of voluntary subscriptions, of trust right, and other evasions of the law, seem very much to have abated the zeal and activity of those teachers. They have many of them become very learned, ingenious, and respectable men; but they have in general ceased to be very popular preachers. The Methodists, without half the learning of the Dissenters, are very much more in vogue." One is tempted to continue the quotation, but the *Wealth of Nations* is easily available, and the reader can continue for himself.

In spite of the fact that he agrees with Hume that an excess of

[4] A possible exception is found in the writings of a group of American economists in the generation before the first World War, especially T. N. Carver, S. N. Patten, and Richard T. Ely. None of them, however, made particularly significant contributions to economic theory; their works are little read nowadays, and the American Economic Association which they helped to found today exhibits practically no marks of their influence.

religious enthusiasm, when it manifests itself in violent factionalism, is a grave danger to society, he does not follow Hume in what would seem to be the obvious conclusion, that the remedy is to moderate religion by the establishment of a monopolistic state church. Monopoly in religion as in everything else is distasteful to him, and consequently he comes out in favor of free competition in religion, the separation of church and state, and the consequent multiplication of sects, for, he says, "the concessions which they would mutually find it both convenient and agreeable to make to one another, might in time reduce the doctrine of the greater part of them to that pure and rational religion, free from every mixture of absurdity, imposture, or fanaticism, such as wise men have in all ages of the world wished to see established; but such as positive law has perhaps never yet established—because, with regard to religion, positive law always has been, and probably always will be, more or less influenced by popular superstition and enthusiasm." If the enthusiasm of competing sects leads society into too "unsocial or disagreeably rigorous" a moral code, this can easily be remedied by the State promoting first the study of science and philosophy and secondly frequent and gay public diversions. Then, as a good Scot should, he comes out in favor of the equality, but not the democracy, of the Presbyterian form of government, and urges that the clergy should not be too well paid, because "nothing but the most exemplary of morals can give dignity to a man of small fortune."

I doubt if anything so witty and penetrating has ever been written on the economic sociology of religion. Yet nowhere do we find any deep understanding of the *content* of religion. Neither the transports nor the dark night of the soul have any place in this pellucid eighteenth century air. Adam Smith could never have had any real knowledge of the mind of the Wesleys. Mystical experience of any kind he would have dismissed as "fanaticism and enthusiasm." He is in some sense almost the ideal of the "good" intellectual; a very good, very moral, admirable, almost one might say a pious man. Yet there is clearly a realm of experience into which he does not penetrate. He can tell us a great deal about the forces that make for decay in religion as it becomes entangled with the world; he can tell us very little about the ultimate sources of its life and power. The world and its corruption are much easier to observe and describe than heaven and its purity; the

cooling of zeal takes place in public, but it is kindled inwardly. Only those who have in some measure walked the road to Emmaus know how far it stretches through history, and how the heart that is "strangely warmed," whether of a Paul, a Francis, a Fox, a Wesley or a Booth can set great movements in motion and change the whole temper of an age. The followers of these movements, it is true, become in their turn "learned, ingenious, and respectable"; but instead of competition reducing all to the stationary equilibrium of a "pure and rational religion" the status quo is perpetually disturbed by the invasion of new enthusiasts and a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit—a Spirit neither learned, nor ingenious, nor respectable, but bearing unmistakable marks of heavenly origin.

IV.

It is evident that the economist, and especially the teacher of economics, who is at the same time a man of religion—more specifically, let us say, a practicing Christian—will be exposed to certain rather special temptations and dangers because of the craft which he follows, and it may be well to examine these in further detail. We may note first, briefly, some problems which arise because the economist is of necessity an intellectual by profession, and therefore in common with other intellectuals may be particularly subject to those "higher vices, that have to be paid for at higher prices." Pride, envy, self-love, self-deceit, self-righteousness, cynicism, frivolousness and cowardice are common diseases in intellectual circles, and of these the most to be feared is pride, a disease utterly devastating in its ultimate effects, yet so subtle that there seems to be no remedy for it save a simple-hearted daily dependence upon God. The teacher also, in general, has certain problems which arise from the nature of his occupation—the temptation to a misuse of authority, or to gain authority over his students by a mere display of wit or erudition rather than by devotion to truth—how much easier it is to say a clever thing than a true one! These problems however are not peculiar to the economist, and I merely mention them here. One problem which is especially likely to trouble the social scientist is that of preventing his moral and religious concerns from undermining the scientific integrity of his specialized discipline. Many people are attracted into the social

sciences, and especially perhaps to economics, because they feel a concern for the ills of society or wish to learn how to reform them. This is a most proper motivation, yet it needs to be disciplined by a strong sense of scientific integrity and by a willingness to acquire real skill in the abstract disciplines before venturing to make applications. Our notions of what *ought to be* must not be allowed to prejudice our painstaking inquiry into what *is,* and goodwill is in no sense a substitute for scientific competence—nor, of course, is scientific competence a substitute for goodwill.

On the whole, however, the atmosphere of our institutions of higher learning is so overwhelmingly favorable to scientific competence that the professional—as opposed perhaps to the amateur—economist is not in much danger of sacrificing his scientific integrity to moral fervor. It is the opposite danger which threatens him—that of becoming so engrossed in the refinements of scientific abstraction—and in the substantial rewards, which in these days often accompany proficiency in such abstractions—that he forgets the ills of society and becomes deaf to the cry of the hungry and blind to the misery of the oppressed. It may be true that a man does not understand the laws of demand and supply any better for being a member of the Communion of Saints. It may be, even, that the clamorous realities of the Communion of Saints actually unfit a man for performing the delicate and beautiful abstractions of economic theory. It is also true, however, that it is possible to retreat into abstraction from the demands which the real world is making upon us, and to take refuge from the demands of the moral law behind a screen of scientific indifference. The prolonged contemplation of abstract systems may also lead to a certain cynicism and weariness: a paralysis of the will-to-good sets in because of a sense of the immense complexity of social life and the ill effects of a rash do-good-ism. It was not the economists who liberated the slaves or who passed the Factory Acts, but the rash and ignorant Christians! Those who have knowledge have a peculiar responsibility to be sensitive to the ills of the world, for if they are not, then it will be the ignorant who will be the movers of events, and the value of knowledge will be lost.

V.

I turn now to the problems which are likely to be encountered

in the actual teaching of economics. There are perhaps four main divisions of the subject matter: (i) pure theory, (ii) the description of present-day economic institutions, (iii) the study of economic history and (iv) the study of economic policy. This division does not correspond to any division of courses—indeed, the courses given are likely to include something of all four aspects. A course on Money and Banking, for instance, is likely to include some theory of money, some description of financial institutions, some history, and some policy discussion. Pure theory is essentially a branch of mathematics or logic: religion may therefore be expected to make very little impact on it. There is no more reason to suppose a "Christian" economic theory, for instance, than there is to suppose a "Christian" mathematics. Theory is essentially a tool, and should not be even a highly specialized tool. Tools or instruments can only be given moral or religious attributes as they are specialized. There is no such thing as a Christian screwdriver, for screwdrivers may be used either for good or for evil ends quite indiscriminately. It is true, of course, that historically economic theory developed as a rather specialized instrument for the interpretation of early industrial capitalism. This limitation however has been steadily relaxed, and the progress of theory is towards greater and greater generality: the most significant techniques of economic theory, for instance, are as applicable to socialist or to primitive economies as they are to capitalism. This is particularly true of what may be called "equilibrium economics"; it is less true of the theory of economic change and development, where purely economic abstractions are less useful and a broad interpretation of history is necessary.

Similarly in the description of economic institutions there is not much contact with religion, though it may be relevant to point out how certain institutions, such as commercial or bank credit, depend on the existence of standards of individual honesty and integrity which are themselves in part a product of religion. It is when we come to the study and interpretation of economic history, however, that the contact between religious and economic life becomes clear and significant, as we have shown earlier. In considerations of economic policy also the *ends* of society cannot be left out of the picture, and the abstractions of pure economics can only carry us a small part of the way. We may say, in fact, that in any field

which involves the *application* of economic principles there is great danger among specialists of confounding abstraction with reality, and of drawing unwarranted conclusions from abstract logic.

The nature—and dangers—of the economic abstraction are so little understood, even among economists, that a brief digression on this topic may be in order. The focus of interest of economics is the *commodity*—that is, something which can be exchanged, produced, and consumed. Exchange, production, consumption, and accumulation are the main human activities on which economics concentrates. Economics is not however primarily interested in human behavior as such: it is interested in the "behavior of commodities." The world of commodities is something which is regarded as following its own laws of motion, like the planets of the solar system; the men who move them are not the focus of interest, any more than the angels, if any, who move the planets are a focus of interest of the astronomer. We know, of course, that in reality it is not commodities that behave, but men, and that commodity prices, outputs, accumulations, exchanges, and so on are ultimately the result of human behavior. But if human behavior is regular enough it can be neglected, just as astronomers can neglect angels. And *in the mass* human behavior is fairly regular—which explains, incidentally, why so much of economics assumes the mass-interactions of perfect competition and why indeterminacy appears in the theory of oligopoly—i.e. in the interaction of *few* exchangers. It may be noticed incidentally that the same difficulty crops up in physics, where the law of behavior of gases, being a statistical law involving enormous numbers of molecules ("perfect competition") is nicely determinate, but where much less is known about the behavior of individual molecules, and where the strangest indeterminacies crop up in the oligopolistic interactions of the few in the atom. This remoteness from human behavior is seen most clearly perhaps in the Keynesian economics, which consists of "models" (solar systems!) whose component variables (national income, consumption, investment) are vast statistical aggregates which enjoy cozy relationships among themselves but which are only distantly related to the millions of flesh-and-blood people of whose experiences these aggregate variables are in some sense a sum.

The economist is quite falsely accused of creating an "economic man"—that revolting creature of popular imagination who knows, in the words of Oscar Wilde, the price of everything and the value of nothing. If ever there was an economic man (which I doubt) he certainly died at the hands of Philip Wicksteed, a Unitarian minister, and perhaps the greatest economist of the late nineteenth century. In his *Common Sense of Political Economy* Wicksteed established economics firmly as a general theory of choice under conditions of limited resources, and the student who has read his illustrations of the theory of value in terms of how much one should shorten family prayers in order to speed a parting guest to the train, or how high a cliff one should jump off to save a mother-in-law will have little doubt of the generality of economic principles. It is evident from the above also that economics cannot be accused of being materialistic. Economics clearly recognizes that all material objects are intermediate goods, mere means which serve the end of increasing that ultimate spiritual product known technically as "Utility." The economist does not know what utility is, any more than the physicist knows what electricity is, but he certainly could not do without it.

The danger in the economic abstraction lies in its very success. I am not attacking abstraction as such—it is absolutely necessary if the huge complexity of human life-experience is to be reduced to manageable terms. Moreover the economic abstraction is reasonably coherent and is very illuminating in the interpretation of history, both in the large and in the small. But because of its coherence, its beauty and its success, its practitioners—especially those skilled in mathematics—are apt to forget that it is an abstraction, and that it is men and not commodities that are the ultimate social reality. A good example of both the necessity and the danger of economic abstraction is found in the study of labor: unless we understand clearly that labor *is* a commodity, in spite of all pious pronouncements to the contrary, we shall never understand the phenomena of industrial relations. But we shall also not understand industrial relations unless we realize that labor is much *more* than a commodity, and that the labor-bargain involves a complex set of psychological, sociological, even theological relationships out of which the commodity aspect is abstracted.

It is at this point, I think, that the teacher whose acquaintance

with religion is something more than second hand can be of great help to his students, not only as persons but also as economists. To seek God is to find man. To live deeply with the life of Jesus, as revealed in the Gospels, is to know the glory, wonder, folly, and depravity of man in his fullness. Unless the economist has something of this sense of the fullness of man he will be in constant danger of misusing his abstraction, particularly as applied to the interpretation of history and in developing an appraisal of economic policy. It is not, of course, the business of a teacher to interlard his teaching with sermons, and there are, of course, the familiar dangers; the danger of using a position of authority in one field to give weight to opinions or indoctrinations in another; the danger of insensitivity to the religious susceptibilities of students of differing faiths on the one hand, or of tampering with truth to avoid giving offense on the other. A teacher who makes clear, however, when he is speaking as a specialist and when as a whole person, and who approaches his task with a proper humility, can avoid these dangers and give his students a sense of the significance and setting of his specialized knowledge in a way that is impossible for one who never transgressed the narrow limits of his own discipline.

VI.

It remains to consider some of the responsibilities of the economist towards the church—not so much towards the religious organization of which he is a member, as towards the "Church Invisible" of which the visible churches are manifestations. It is none the less true for being almost a cliché that the crisis of our age is at bottom a religious crisis. Religion, we feel, should be the Center of Town, the integrating factor in the welter of life, experience, and knowledge. There is sting in the remark of a Roman Catholic friend of mine that a State University is a "City of God that is all suburbs"; our innumerable specialties spread around the intellectual map in formless clusters, with only the most congested trickles of communication between them, and there seems to be no center which can relate one to the other. Because of this the increase of knowledge actually threatens to destroy us, and we are faced with the nightmare of infinite power in the hands of unregenerate man. The trouble is, of course, that the town has grown

so big! The little medieval center, with its quaint narrow streets and lovely cathedral, is quite inadequate to handle the traffic of the vast suburbs that have grown up in the past three centuries. The highways that could handle the traffic from Ptolemy and Aristotle with comfort have hardly adjusted themselves to Copernicus and Darwin, and are hopelessly congested by Freud, Keynes, and Einstein! Consequently the true center is by-passed, rival centers of nationalism, fascism, communism and so on are set up, and the whole vast city threatens to disintegrate. And so we long for a new and greater Aquinas, to bring together once again Grace and Truth, Wisdom and Power, Faith and Knowledge in blessed union.

In any such synthesis the social sciences must find a place. We are apt today to think of the natural sciences, with their ominous threat of atomic or bacteriological destruction, as the greatest danger to mankind. It may well be however that the social sciences, all of which seem to be on the threshhold of a vast expansion of knowledge, ultimately constitute an even greater threat to human dignity, welfare, or even existence. In the sciences knowledge inevitably leads to power and power is of itself neutral—it can be power for evil just as for good. Indeed, it may not even be neutral, for the existence of power may even predispose to evil. But whereas the natural sciences lead mainly to power over nature, the social sciences lead directly to power over man. The horrors of psychological and sociological warfare may exceed those of atomic warfare, for the physicist can merely kill and maim men's bodies, where the social psychologist may be able to kill and maim their souls. A greater nightmare than that of atomic destruction is that of a world tyranny resting on the unshakable foundation of social-scientific knowledge of the manipulation of men—the "Brave New Worlds" of Aldous Huxley or George Orwell. Between us and this triumph of learning, ingenuity and respectability there stands that strange force in history which can only be called the Holy Spirit: the foolishness of God, the naïveté of children, and the disreputability of saints, this spirit of Christ, of Divine Love. Unless men—including scientists, social or natural—can be brought under the gentle domination of this spirit, all science is dismal, and leads to the damnation of man and not to his salvation, for knowledge leads

to power, and power without holiness—i.e., the right will—is damnation.

To say that there is danger in knowledge and power does not mean, however, that there is virtue in ignorance and impotence. And even if there were, there seems to be no way short of catastrophe by which knowledge and power can be lost, any more than innocence can be regained. There is no way of uneating the Apple, no way back to the Garden of Eden, and the only way out of the City of Destruction leads to the City of God, to the redemption and not the suppression of knowledge.

The economist, along with others who are gifted with specialized knowledge, has a responsibility here to bring his knowledge to the service of the church and to keep the channels of communication open between his own specialty and the "center of town." This task has its own special dangers. In a subject like economics which deals with the commonplaces of life and which for the most part uses the language of ordinary life the specialist finds it difficult to be patient with the amateur, and is apt to pretend to a greater degree of certainty of knowledge than he possesses in order to impress the unspecialized. The professional economist is apt to be impatient with the "easy answers" of the preachers, such as prohibition, "sentimental unionism," and the "cooperative commonwealth." He faces on the one hand the naïve conservatism of fundamentalist Protestantism, with its limitation of interest to the grossly identifiable sins and its narrow concept of regeneration, and on the other hand the almost equally naïve liberalism of the "social gospel," with its emphasis on social sins which are not identifiable enough to trouble the individual conscience and its undue optimism in regard to regeneration by legislation. He is apt to be equally impatient with the millenialist crudities of Marxism, with its subtle substitution of moral judgments for intellectual analysis. On the other hand his knowledge of the infinite complexities of social life is apt to paralyze his will-to-action and to breed a kind of sophisticated conservatism of hopelessness. For the sake of his own spiritual and intellectual health the economist must face the challenge of prophetic indignation: on the other hand the prophet also must be prepared to submit his moral insights to the rigorous discipline of intellectual analysis when it comes to translating these insights into policies.

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